DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 263 754 FL 015 361

AUTHOR Wederspahn, Ann
TITLE Self-Designed Training: An Approach to Teacher Development.
PUB DATE 85
NOTE 6p.
PUB TYPE Reports - Descriptive (141) -- Journal Articles (080)
JOURNAL CIT Passage; v1 n3 p8-12 Win 1985

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Educational Objectives; *English (Second Language); Independent Study; *Individualized Instruction; *Inservice Teacher Education; Interprofessional Relationship; Interviews; *Language Teachers; Material Development; Peer Evaluation; *Professional Development; *Program Design; Refugees; Research Projects; Supervisors

ABSTRACT

A design for individualizing in-service training for teachers of English as a second language and cultural orientation for refugees to meet the needs of instructors with different backgrounds and degrees of experience is presented. The teachers and their supervisors identify each others' needs and interests, state learning objectives to be accomplished, and devise activities to meet those objectives within a stated time period. Examples are given of individually-designed, in-service training such as focused peer observation, interviews, materials design, and simple research. (MSE)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)
☒ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.
• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official NIE position or policy.

Self-Designed Training: An Approach to Teacher Development

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY
G. R. Tucker
TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

Ann Wederspahn
Philippine Refugee Processing Center

ED263754

Upgrading ESL and CO teachers' knowledge and classroom skills is a concern in many refugee training programs. In-service training programs are often faced with the problem of meeting the needs of instructors with differing backgrounds and degrees of experience. A design is presented here for individualizing the approach to teacher development. Teachers and their supervisors identify each teacher's needs and interests, state learning objectives to be accomplished, and devise activities to meet those objectives within a stated time. Examples are given of individually designed in-service training, such as focussed peer observations, interviews, materials design, and simple research.

Connie Mabalung began teaching ESL to refugees four months ago after several years as an elementary school teacher. She is at ease in a classroom and relates well to her Vietnamese students. Connie's theoretical background regarding how adults learn languages is sketchy, however, and some of her carefully designed dialogs and drills are questionable in terms of the amount of actual language learning that takes place. The pace of her class is also erratic.

Alex Cruz has taught Cultural Orientation (CO) to refugees for several years, is considered an excellent teacher by his supervisor, and often plays host to new teachers doing their practice teaching. Although he enjoys his students, boredom is beginning to set in and he would like to explore some new approaches to teaching cultural attitude awareness.

Alex and Connie are typical of the mixture of teachers in many refugee language and orientation programs: effective, experienced teachers; new teachers with serious gaps in their preparation; enthusiastic teachers with weaknesses in particular areas; jaded old-timers who may not recognize any need for improvement; and solid teachers who lack only the inspiration of a new idea or two. Meeting the radically different teacher training needs of such a disparate group is a problem faced by many program administrators.

In some language programs, an increase in a teacher's ability is assumed to come automatically with classroom experience, and no systematic in-service training is provided at all. In other programs, training may be sporadic, with the visit of an occasional consultant. Required in-service training sessions aimed at the needs of a few are met by yawns from the others. Making all sessions elective, however, often means that those who are already excellent teachers attend, and the ones who most need the training stay home. It is entirely understandable that the systematic upgrading of teachers' skills and knowedge is of low priority in so many instructional programs.

Faced with these problems, compounded by the complexities of dealing with a staff of 430 teachers and 80 supervisors, the International Catholic Migration Commission (ICMC) Training Department at the Philippine Refugee Processing Center (PRPC) has redesigned its approach to training this year. Several assumptions form the philosophical basis for the new design:

- People learn what they need or want to learn. Motivate teachers; do not merely tell them what they must learn.

FL015361

- Teachers have a variety of experiences, strengths, and interests; therefore, their training needs will differ. Provide different training for different needs.
- Neither the teacher nor the supervisor alone can best determine a teacher's training needs. Both have a perspective to offer. Involve both teachers and management in determining what training is necessary.
- Learning takes place through the use of various resources in differing contexts, not only in formal training sessions. Encourage non-traditional learning situations such as peer observations, interviews, discussions, individual reading, and research projects.

It became clear that a design for a verifiable, systematic training scheme which would meet teachers' individual needs was necessary. One workable approach to individualization has been used for many years in U.S. elementary schools: students "contract" with their teacher to accomplish defined objectives within a given time. Thus, at any one time students are involved in many different classroom activities, all leading to accomplishment of their particular contract obligations and, presumably, meeting their own learning needs.

Teachers have a variety of experiences, strengths, and interests; therefore, their training needs will differ. Provide different training for different needs.

This approach has been modified for ESL and CO teachers at the PRPC by requiring each to draw up a quarterly Plan for Professional Development (PPD). Essentially a contract between the teacher and the organization, the PPD allows teachers to focus their training on those areas of greatest need and most interest. Four times a year, teachers meet individually with their supervisors to discuss their professional strengths, interests, and areas needing improvement. Teachers usually come prepared with a draft of what they would like to accomplish during the quarter and, together with their supervisor, revise it to incorporate any areas the supervisor feels are necessary. In some cases, different needs assessment instruments have been used with groups of teachers prior to the individual conferences in order to help them identify areas on which to focus. Sessions on writing objectives and identifying available community resources were provided the first two times teachers wrote their PPDs.

The PPD form itself consists of an informational heading and four columns. Primary and secondary objectives for development during the three-month period are listed, along with specific activities to meet each objective. Objectives are usually broad but measurable, while the activities are highly specific and carry target dates for completion. Each activity combines the taking in of information in some form and output that confirms the learning. The supervisor determines how much training credit will be awarded each activity and records it in the last column. (In the ICMC program, teachers are required to complete four to six hours weekly of such training in addition to attending team meetings and other requirements.)

Connie Mabalung has decided that her primary objective is to learn how to make her lessons more communicative and less mechanical. To accomplish this, she has drafted her contract to include attending a scheduled training session on "Communicative Activities for the Classroom" on January 28; to read the book *The Communicative Approach to Language Teaching* (Littlewood: 1981) by February 15, reporting on it orally; and to devise and write up by March 10 eight specific communication activities that she has tried in the classroom. As a secondary objective, she wants to learn more about the culture of her Vietnamese students, especially their educational background and how it may affect their learning styles. Consequently, she has designed a project that involves interviewing ten Vietnamese about their past school experiences. She will describe the results in a short paper by March 30.

On reviewing Connie's PPD draft, her supervisor, Peter, concurs with the first objective, suggesting an additional article for her to read on the topic. For her secondary objective, Peter helps her define questions to use in the interviews and then suggests she limit the scope of the project somewhat by cutting the number of interviews to five. Peter then reminds her that she has had some problems in pacing her classes and suggests that she include improvement in that area as a third objective. He provides names of teachers whose classes she might observe to see how they handle the pacing and sequencing of learning activities. Connie agrees, and incorporates the changes and additions into her draft.

Over the next three months, Peter and Connie confer informally on the progress she is making toward accomplishing her objectives. When observing her classes, Peter remembers to pay particular attention to her pacing and use of communicative

PLAN FOR PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Teacher: Connie Mabalung
Supervisor: Peter Morales

Period: Jan. 6 - March 30
Hrs. needed: 44

OBJECTIVES	ACTIVITIES	TARGET DATES	TRAINING CREDIT
Primary			
1. To identify eight classroom activities that will increase my students' use of English to communicate.	(a) Attend session "Communicative Activities for the Classroom."	(a) 1/28	(a) 2 hrs
	(b) Read *The Communicative Approach to Language Teaching.* (Littlewood: 1981)	(b) 2/15	(b) 8 hrs
	(c) Design, try in classroom, and write up eight specific communication activities (one per curriculum unit).	(c) 3/10	(c) 15 hrs
	(d) Do oral report on book.		
Secondary			
2. To determine what influence their educational background has on the learning styles of my Vietnamese students.	(a) Interview five Vietnamese students regarding their schooling and attitudes related to education. (See attached list of questions.)	(a) 3/20	(a) 10 hrs
	(b) Write up conclusions based on interviews.	(b) 3/30	(b) 3 hrs
3. To liven the pace of my classes and make the transition between activities smoother.	Observe the following teachers and discuss pacing with them.		
	John Figureres	1/10	2 hrs
	Melinda Dubois	2/8	2 hrs
	Susan Caliad	2/27	2 hrs

activities. During a meeting, Connie shows the results of her interviews with the Vietnamese students. Toward the end of the quarter, Connie and Peter sit down again to discuss the extent to which she was able to meet her objectives. Based on her needs and interests, she drafts a PPD for the next quarter.

The concept of input/output is a basic feature of all the training activities. In each, the teacher is taking in new information, whether by reading, watching a class, viewing a video, or interviewing someone. In order to consolidate that information, to verify the learning, and put it in a broader perspective, some product is expected. The output may take the form of a written or oral report, a compilation of materials to be shared with other teachers, or perhaps a specific application in the classroom.

Most of the learning activities teachers have chosen to fulfill their PPD objectives fall into the following six categories:

- Readings: books, articles, chapters from books, and reports from other teachers.
- Peer observations: always focussed on one objective, followed by a conference with the observed teacher.
- Individual projects: usually classroom-based research, sometimes materials development, always involving both input and output.
- Study of a refugee language: introductions to Vietnamese, Khmer, Lao, or Cantonese languages, taught by a refugee, and including periodic sessions examining the language learning process.
- Attendance at workshops: sessions chosen to meet specific PPD objectives, reported on to the supervisor.
- Presentation of workshops: designing and presenting a training session for other teachers.

At the PRPC, a large training staff and a core of 80 supervisors make it possible to offer an extensive selection of formal sessions from which teachers can choose to help meet their professional development objectives. Course topics are determined by the needs assessment which precedes PPD writing, and presenters are recruited from management, refugees, and the teaching staff in addition to trainers and supervisors. A course catalog and calendar are published prior to each quarterly training cycle, and a tracking system monitors attendance. Teachers in their first year of service have 28 required sessions to attend during the year, generally courses determined by their department to provide an essential theoretical base for adequate instruction. This still allows several hours a week for self-designed training through which the new teacher can explore areas of need and interest. More experienced teachers are given the freedom to design their entire training program through the PPD process.

Application to U.S. Refugee Programs

How can this individualized approach to training be applied to the more usual type of stateside refugee program: five ESL teachers and a job developer in Iowa or a project director and twenty part-time volunteers in Louisiana? Perhaps there is even more relevance for those than for a well-funded, highly professional agency such as ICMC. It is precisely in such small organizations, usually struggling for funds and materials and often using non-professional or inexperienced teachers, that the teachers both need and would welcome a way to better their skills. Anyone, at any level in a refugee-oriented organization, could choose to develop and carry through such a plan for professional development alone. The fact is that few people are motivated and organized enough to do so. It takes a project director, a supervisor, or a key person in the organization who will take the initiative to structure such an individualized learning scheme and provide the follow-through to actually make it happen.

A simple version of such an aproach to teacher development could be implemented with only the following four steps:

1. Organize your resources:
   - Provide access to reading matter such as books, files, and reports.
   - List people within your own organization and their areas of expertise, including teachers to be observed and people to be interviewed.
   - List other resources, providing names of persons and organizations in the community who could provide information or materials.
2. Hold a preparation session with your teachers:
   - Review the purpose of the individual Plan for Professional Development.
   - Assess teacher needs and interest, evaluating areas for improvement and new areas to explore.
3. Confer individually with teachers to review their drafted PPDs.
4. Provide follow-up conferences as needed to check progress, help identify additional resources, and congratulate teachers as they achieve their objectives.

All of us learn in different ways and at different rates only what we need or want to learn. Teachers in refugee programs, whether volunteer or

professional, new or experienced, will acquire the skills and knowledge to be better teachers in their own way and at their own speed. A well-organized in-service training program can foster that learning by providing a systematic way for teachers to focus on their own objectives for professional development and to devise ways to meet them.

REFERENCES

Littlewood, William. 1981. *The communicative approach to language teaching.* Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press.

***Ann Wederspahn** is the Training Officer at the Philippine Refugee Processing Center, where a Training Department staff of 14 serves 430 Filipino teachers and 80 Filipino and American supervisors. She has spent twenty years in the field of second language and cross-cultural education, first as a teacher and then in teacher training, program design, and management. Before assuming her current position, Ms. Wederspahn directed language programs in the U.S. and Guatemala. She has also been a teacher trainer and consultant in Costa Rica, Venezuela, Ecuador, Colombia, and the U.S. Ms. Wederspahn holds a master's degree from Harvard University, where she combined work in linguistics and psychology with management courses.*